Movement of US Ship in Indian Ocean

1401. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention was drawn to the US research ship, Ron Brown, moving into the Bay of Bengal in North-East Indian Ocean, in May 1999; and

(b) if so, what was the objective behind the US move and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The ship, an Oceanographic and Meteorological Research Vessel of the United States of America was gathering ocean and atmospheric data in the Indian Ocean Region, including the Bay of Bengal. Initially, it operated off the West Coast of India from 4th March, to 23rd March, 1999, and, thereafter, moved from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal for carrying out similar observations. Throughout this period, the Vessel had stayed outside the Exclusive Economic Zone *i.e.* beyond 200 Nautical miles from the Indian Coast line.

Kargil Martyrs from A.P.

1402. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of soldiers and officers from Andhra Pradesh killed while driving away infiltrators from Kargil region;

(b) to aid or *ex-gratia* grant provided to each of them by the Central Government;

(c) whether Government have made any arrangement to ensure welfare of family members of the martyrs from time to time;

(d) whether Government are considering to accord higher posts under Central Government to eligible persons among them; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?